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1. Assassination of President Carlos CASTILLO Arana

Summary of Recent Press Coverage

1. Press coverage of the assassination of President Carlos CASTILLO Arana is still during the month of September. In spite of the concentration on election news in the month of October, there has been an increase in publicity connected with the assassination. Although the information comes entirely from overt sources, it is felt by Headquarters that it will be of interest to Headquarters. There follows a summary of some of the articles which have appeared in the local press during the last two weeks.

2. El Financiero, on 4 October 1957, said that the Public Ministry had revealed a detail not previously known to the public, which was that on the morning of the assassination, a member of the Presidential Guard had deserted. The Attorney General of Guatemala, Manuel de LUNA Cardona, released to the press on 4 October the results of the investigation of the deserter. This investigation revealed the deserter had been a police officer in the collection of this person, Miguel Angel Estrada, for the purpose of the assassination. On 1 June 1957, Miguel Angel Estrada, a police officer, was in the Presidential Guard and had been ordered to submit a written application due to the fact that he was ill. LUNA said that he knew Miguel Angel Estrada, the assassin, only casually and as a friend of the latter's intentions. LUNA said that WILKES was associated with his love for one woman, that he frequently spoke of liberty, and that he called LUNA a "thug" (this is a Guatemalan slang term which is roughly equivalent to a combination of our "fug" "bitch", "apple polisher", and "spring" but applies specifically to someone who is trying to work himself into an official government position). LUNA claims that he deserted because he had seriously injured his shoulder in a fall from a horse and he was seeking to request discharge. On the morning of 25 July he deserted and started for the town of his birth, San Cristobal Verapaz, on the Guatemala/El Salvador border but was captured on 27 July in the mountains in the Department of Jutiapa. The article mentioned that it seemed a coincidence that WILKES had also injured his hand and had requested permission to leave duty but that a Police Agent told the story did not warrant the desertion. The article said that LUNA has been accused of desertion and was being detained, and that LUNA's revealed no knowledge of or participation in the assassination. LUNA did verify the existence of the deserter and had been associated with him and during his years in his military.

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4. The same article also said that upon being questioned, military officials who had been on duty in the Presidential Residence said that they had permitted Colonel Antonio Castellanos to enter the residence and that they had not permitted anyone else to approach or speak to the President inside the Palace as he needed protection only while he was outside. These officials also said that they were not permitted even to be in the garden when the President and his wife went to the dining room, which accounted for their absence on the night of the assassination.

5. El Financiero, on 10 October, carried an account of the questioning of Monseñor Fernando Herzberg, Vicar-General of the Ecclesiastical National. This investigation was effected by the Minister of War as a result of a statement made by Capitán Gloriano Castillo, former aide of Enrique Salas de Castillo, widow of the President. This captain claimed that when he had brought Monseñor Herzberg to the Residence on the night of the assassination, HERZBERG had said that three days prior to the assassination he, HERZBERG, had sent word to the President, through Col. Manuel Castellanos, that there were rumors of the assassination of the President. During the investigation, HERZBERG flatly denied having made such a statement to either Capt. Castillo or Col. Castellanos. According to the article, CASTELLANOS is the brother-in-law of HERZBERG.

6. A previous article in La Esfera said that Monseñor Fernando Herzberg imagined that the above-mentioned rumor had resulted from a misquotation of his statement to Capt. Castillo on their way to the Residence the night of the assassination. HERZBERG said that after his initial shock at the news, he had said nothing to the effect that such a tragedy was not too surprising since so many rumors were constantly circulating concerning plots against the President, at which time he cited special broadcasts heard shortly before the assassination on the Radio Nacional which warned President CASTILLO that he would be assassinated.

7. El Financiero, on 12 October 1957, reported that Enrique Salas de Castillo, general aide and confidant to President CASTILLO Armas, accused Colonels Antonio Castellanos and Manuel Castellanos of negligence in attending to the personal security of the President. ARZOBISP added that these two Colonels had completely isolated the President from people who had his entire confidence and who would have readily given their lives in his defense.

8. El Financiero, on 15 October, published an account of the investigation of Col. Manuel Castellanos, Governor of Guatemala. It was said that the source of three people who informed him in Guatemala that Castellanos had been in the Presidential Residence between 20 and 25 July. He personally informed President CASTILLO of this plot when the latter was in the city of Guatemala en route to his home. The President asked that he, HERZBERG, give this information to Col. Manuel Castellanos, who had accompanied the President on this trip. The names of the three people who had passed the information to HERZBERG were withheld from the press, saying that they would be named at the time of their questioning.

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8. Prensa Libre, on 15 October, said that Colonel Jose Figueres Ferrer and General Oscar Arias, formerly first and third chiefs of the Presidential staff, respectively, would be questioned concerning the incident on 22 October at 1000 hours. Topics about which they will be questioned include the charge that they isolated the President from those in whom he had confidence, that they ordered those responsible with the protection of the President to protect themselves, and that in spite of their knowledge of plots against the President, they did not take appropriate precautions.

9. Prensa Libre, on 15 October, published partial results of the chemical examination of the clothes worn by the late President at the time of his assassination. The article said that a spectroscopic examination revealed that one bullet was fired at the President from a frontal position at a distance not greater than 35 centimeters. Although the official report has not been issued yet, reportedly the above fact has been established by test shots fired at cloth-covered sandbags. Three distances were used in these tests: 35, 50, and 100 centimeters. The powder burns and perforations produced by the shots fired at a distance of 35 centimeters were identical in pigmentation and number with those appearing on the breast of the jacket worn by the former President at the time of the assassination. The article added that, due to some coincidences and a series of strange things found on the clothes of the President, the Chemical Department could not yet deliver its final report but hoped to do so within 8 days.

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